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A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF OUR ANCESTORS.

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

GEN'L. ROBERT PORTERFIELD,

DELIVERED JUNE 4, 1843,

BY

REV. B. M. SMITH,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TINKLING SPRING, AUGUSTA COUNTY, VA.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

STAUNTON:

PRINTED BY KENTON HARPER.

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TO MY MOTHER

THIS SERMON

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

THE AUTHOR.

SERMON.

Deut. 32 : 7.

Remember the days of old.

The Jewish historian, inspired to record whatever, relating to his remarkable nation, might serve for the instruction and admonition of mankind, has presented in this chapter, on the one hand, a most eloquent and impressive exhibition of the displays of Divine mercy and goodness to the chosen tribes; and on the other, a faithful description of their rebellious and ungrateful conduct.

It is impossible to peruse such summaries, touching the history of this wonderful people, without acknowledging their adaptation to the purpose of instructing mankind. Some have thought, they discovered in many striking features, a remarkable similarity in the dispensations of God towards our own nation, and those, here recorded, towards the Jews. Without pretending to decide on the propriety of this suggestion, it may be permitted, under the general observation, just offered, to apply the exhortation of the text to our instruction on this interesting occasion.

It is true, our fathers were not descendants from a heathen ancestor, chosen of God, by express revelation, led by remarkable providences, encouraged by extraordinary promises, and taught by angelic ambassadors;—they were never under the galling yoke of Egyptian bondage, "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to foreign despots; nor were they conducted

by a high hand and an outstretched arm, by signs and wonders in Heaven above, on the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, to a land of promise. No sea opened, for them, a passage through its floods; no mountain burned with fire, blazing in the lightnings and echoing to the pealing thunder, which announced the presence of Jehovah, to instruct them in His Law. No rock burst forth with perennial streams, at the touch of their Moses, to allay their thirst; no heavens were darkened by hosts of birds hasting to be their food; and no earth, white with the honied manna, appeased their hunger while it rebuked their infidelity. No Jordan parted before the symbols of their Faith, borne by the Teachers of their Religion; and the walls of no Jericho fell before the miraculous power of the trumpets of their warfare. But shall we say for all this, that the God of all the world, "without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground," has sat an uninterested spectator of our fortunes? If our ancestry sprung from no Abraham, they could say, "though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not," the Lord was our "Father and our Redeemer." They were, to a great extent, the seed of those, whom God acknowledged to be his adopted children, by the fiery furnace of persecution for "Righteousness sake." If the ocean did not open to them a drypath, its winds and its waves received commandment from Him who holdeth them in his fist, to bear them safely to their desired haven. Though God appeared to no Indian Balaam, preventing the fierce purposes of a Balak, yet how wonderfully did his providential care often seem to say to the untutored savage, "touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Though not wasted for their sins in a barren wilderness, yet let us never forget the lessons of wisdom, they, alike with the Jews, were taught, when suffering for unmindfulness of that first of all christian principles in Prudence, "Trust in the Lord, and do good," "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils." If no thunder from Sinai taught them God's Law, yet did He, in his Providence, permit them to hear, with extraordinary clearness and faithfulness, by his appointed ministry, in the days of our national infancy, the gentler sounds of Gospel Mercy, preached in purity and power. If no iron-handed despotism

oppressed their energies, they early discovered, that it was only withheld, till they were no longer too few to be profitable, nor yet too many to be feared. If deliverance were wrought by no storms and fires and famines, and bloody streams and midnight wailings over the work of a destroying angel, or by no Moses, with his miracle working rod, yet God, by his Providence taught their Faith to trust, neither in the horse, nor in chariots, but "in the name of the Lord their God." Pharaoh and his Host were confounded in the Red Sea ; God confounded their enemies in their own council chambers. Egypt was taught by plagues and tornadoes, by disease and death, to know her ruinous policy ; and England learned the same, by the expense of a war, which in a few years swelled her national debt nearly five hundred million dollars. In short, we believe that in instances too numerous for present detail, God, by his Providence towards our fathers, has laid us under perpetual obligations to read and ponder with a personal application, this portion of his Truth, and especially the words of the Text, " Remember the days of old." Nor do I consider it a departure from the spirit of this passage, somewhat to enlarge its application. Moses' Song is composed of a melancholy lamentation over Jewish stubbornness and apostacy, and a triumphant vindication of God's holy and righteous ways, as well as mercy, kindness and love to his people. God, in his Providence, permits us in " remembering the days of old," to recount, not only His goodness, but the virtues of an ancestry, who, with many human infirmities and deep convictions of personal unworthiness, presented to the world the example of some of the rarest virtues, the illustration of some of the purest principles, and the exhibition of the most noble enterprises, which the pen of history has yet recorded.

With some, and those not only the aged, it is very common to expatiate on the virtues of the past generation, and the degeneracy of the present. Whether such views are always just, in every particular, is questionable. The human race, as a body, has certainly made progress in some departments of science and art, at various periods of its history. But to the moralist, man remains the same. The advocates for " human perfectibility," have yet to deduce from facts, their first sound

argument, to establish their positions. With increased facilities for "knowing the right" there yet remains the indomitable disposition to "pursue the wrong." Man, as a moral being, has received no modification of that natural temper which is so faithfully described in the word of God, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." When, therefore, admitting the rapid progress of our race and nation in much which contributes to human knowledge, art and comfort, and rejoicing in the manifest evidence of the greater extent to which sound principles of truth are prevailing, the rapid diffusion of Gospel Light and privileges, and the astonishing results of comparatively feeble instrumentality, in extending these blessings among the dark places of the earth, let us not deceive ourselves into the supposition, that the present generation, as individuals, afford better specimens of human nature, than our ancestors of '76; or that the communities composed of such individuals, have necessarily progressed in the knowledge and practice of sound moral principles, in any proportion to their progress in science and art.

Indeed, we are persuaded, that if ever people had reason to boast of an ancestry, we are the people. Some grow tired, with what they petulantly term, "the garrulity of age." Good manners, to say nothing of religion, should teach us better. The Bible says "honour the hoary head." It is a "crown of glory, when found in the way of Righteousness." And to whom should we look for aid to "remember the days of old," with better prospects of success, than to those, whom God, in his providence, has preserved, to declare his mighty acts, and tell of the abundance of his loving-kindness? We are reminded, by the occasion which has, to-day, added such large numbers to our ordinary congregation, that such are passing away. Another of the Heroic band of the Revolution has been gathered to his Fathers. Few survive him of like age, and equal ability to instruct us, in the history of the past. Few remain to say, I was at Valley Forge and Brandywine, Camden and York. Nearly all those who in the council or the field participated in the memorable contest of 1776-83, have long since "fallen on sleep." Of nearly sixty signers of the Declaration of Inde-

pendence not one is alive, and of thirty-nine members of the Congress which adopted our Federal Constitution, there remain but few, if any. Of those of the armies of the Revolution, who survive, many linger among us, barely living memorials of the past, unable, by reason of physical infirmity or mental imbecility, to communicate either amusement or instruction. Gen. PORTERFIELD, by natural gifts, mental improvement, and an active participation in some of the most stirring scenes of the Revolution, together with the possession to an unusual degree, and for an uncommon period, of his intellectual powers, was peculiarly fitted to instruct us in the annals of the past; while by his kind deportment and venerable years, he was eminently adapted to impress on our minds, his valuable instructions. With him, then, we have buried our most important aid in keeping alive the recollection of our Fathers. We are no longer permitted to hear from his lips the never-tiring recital of the deeds and the words of the men of old. However delightful the privilege, it is ours no more!

Under the influence, then, of the solemn emotions, becoming this Holy day, and this sanctuary of the Most High; impressed by a view of the decaying memorials of generations, who for a hundred years have worshipped on this spot; affected by those tender sentiments, which the death of a revered and honored relative has aroused in the hearts of his descendants, those sympathies for the living felt by all, and that veneration and esteem which our venerated friend inspired while alive, and the regret he occasioned in his death; let us earnestly seek to fix in our minds, such a remembrance of the days of old, as will be for our lasting benefit, such as will supply, in some measure, the want of living admonitors by word and example, and such as will excite us to a diligent emulation of the virtues of our Fathers, and a holy gratitude to God, for their legacy of sound principles, even more valuable, if accepted, than the incomparable Institutions, which they purchased and secured, by their wise counsels and their blood.

I We cannot more appropriately honor the memory of our venerated friend, than by thus following the suggestion of the text, as now fully developed, in its application to us. With ac-

customed modesty, he uniformly declined suggesting a text for his funeral sermon, and though requested by me, to do so, never undertook to give any instructions, relative to the melancholy service, I am, to-day, called to perform. But from acquaintance with his character, from the general tenor of his life, and from express and repeated declarations of his principles, I feel authorised to believe, that could his own wishes have been known, they would have coincided in my present purpose; and however feebly that purpose may be executed, I am encouraged in the attempt, by the conviction, that while I honor the memory of a distinguished patriot, and gratify the dictates of my own feelings, I cannot make this occasion more redound to your benefit, than by presenting, in connexion with his name and character, and himself as a specimen of the generation to which he belonged, the PRINCIPLES OF THE MEN OF THE REVOLUTION.

We have no apotheosis to celebrate. We deify no man nor set of men. We unhesitatingly admit, and grieve to remember, that *all* who counselled and *all* who fought, did not act on the same exalted principles of honor, patriotism, christianity and morality. We claim no perfection for the best; no entire exemption from the infirmities and sins, any more than from the ills, to which man, in his lapsed state, is the miserable heir. But we believe, that by recorded, solemn, deliberate acts of the highest council of the nation; by the admitted character of the men who gave impress to the character of the age; by the actions of the most conspicuous leaders of those, whose prowess achieved and whose wisdom secured our National Independence; by the avowed sentiments of the men, who established our Federal Constitution; and by the character of that public opinion, which sustained such men, such purposes and such acts, it may be easily proved, that our Forefathers not only *acted on Principles*, but on Principles of true Patriotism, of honor and integrity, of Religion and of enlightened Liberty.

1. *They acted on Principles.* By this, of course, I mean, that their motives were not the results of caprice or passion, their Resolutions were not the ebullitions of anger, nor the dictate of faction, their plans were not the immature conceptions of visionary enthusiasts, and their acts, neither the spasmodic

convulsions of rage, nor the fitful bursts of impotent malice or wounded pride. Nor were those men, in any sense, deliberate rebels against just authority. As British subjects they were prepared to yield to the Crown of England all proper service when rightfully demanded, and they did yield it. Whether called to repel French invasions, or punish Indian perfidy, the colonists repeatedly evinced, at once their courage, loyalty and patriotism. But they were the descendants of those, who had, successfully or unsuccessfully, contended for the blessings of civil and religious liberty. The early emigrants to America were, in part, Refugees from civil or ecclesiastical tyranny, or both, in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Holland and Germany, and in part, those who sought this new world, to enjoy, without molestation or fear of change, those Rights of conscience, which were of uncertain tenure across the Atlantic. The principles they brought to the land of their adoption were those, which for three centuries in Britain, and more than one on the continent had, violently or silently, been undermining the ancient thrones of despotism in Church and State. From the age of the weak minded John, to the period of the English Revolution, there had been a constant contest between arbitrary power and popular Rights. The former had continually lost and the latter gained; but what was lost, was only yielded when no struggles could retain it, and what was gained, was at the cost of some of the best blood of England, and the loss of some of the best subjects of the British Crown. The Reformation of Religion encouraged and promoted, or engendered those sound principles of civil and religious liberty, which constitute the glory of our political Institutions. But both in England and on the continent, the effort to repress the growth of free principles, became more energetic, as their operation became more extended. Charles I. lost his crown and his head, a Martyr to his arbitrary principles, while thousands of his subjects lost life and property, and thousands more surrendered home and country, contending for the fundamental principle of popular freedom, "the voice of the people must be heard in the Government." "It has been said, that our 'Adam and Eve came out of Newgate.' If so, it was because that prison had been

crowded with the best men of their day." Yes, our ancestry whether English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch, French or German, was mostly composed of Refugees, but Refugees from Oppression, not from Justice; of Exiles, but Exiles for unquenchable virtue, not for crime; of Convicts, but Convicts of resistance to arbitrary power, not of violation of righteous Laws. It is readily seen, that the descendants of such men, imbibing their principles with their own first perceptions, would not readily yield to any attempt to oppress them, however slight the occasion. To be taxed five pence or five pounds, without representation, involved alike, in their estimation, the destruction of their Rights as freemen. To be *compelled* to sustain a creed, which they approved or disapproved, was alike, to them, a violation of the Rights of conscience. They took up arms, not to gain, but defend, their freedom; not to oppress or conquer others, but to sustain themselves. It was *on Principles*, long cherished, fully weighed, clearly understood and dearly loved *Principles*, they opposed the arrogant claims of a corrupt Ministry, a pensioned parliamentary majority, and a vain, ill-advised monarch. It was on *Principles* held as their birthright, they volunteered, ill supported, meanly equipped, barely armed, with troops of raw, undisciplined militia, or untrained continental recruits, to encounter the well appointed Regiments of England's Armies. It was on Principles, not on expediency, nor on compromises with tyranny, they laid the foundation of a nation, when they discovered their Rights, as colonies, were disregarded; and amidst discouragements the most appalling, difficulties the most overwhelming, and trials the most depressing, they pressed forward to the attainment of their ends.

2. In suggesting some of those Principles of our Revolutionary Fathers, to which it is profitable to direct your attention, I am embarrassed, on the one hand, by the want of time to do every topic justice, and on the other, by the unsuitableness of some, for a very extended notice on such an occasion and in this place. I cannot, however, be persuaded, that it is unbefitting the solemnities of this day or the nature of my office, in a few words, to remind you of the *principles of Patriotism, Honor, Industry and Simplicity*, on which those men acted.

while mainly endeavoring to set before your minds, a view of their sentiments on *Religion and Religious Liberty.*

Seldom has the world witnessed greater sacrifices, more single-hearted devotion, and untiring zeal, in any cause, than was evinced, by our ancestry, in securing our Liberties. Whether by contributions of property, risk of Life, or that which is dearer, Reputation, they uniformly present the most conclusive evidences of the possession of most exalted patriotic motive. When called to the council or the field, they obeyed; and yet we read of no indecent haste to run before they were called. There was honor attached to their office, but there was danger too. He who, to-day, might be haranguing a popular Assembly, the Continental or State Legislature, on the Rights of the colonies, or, sword in hand, with his ragged half-armed Volunteers, charging on some British Regiment, might to-morrow, be in the hold of a Prison-ship or swinging to the gibbet. We read of no time-serving demagogues, no fair spoken, loud tongued declaimer for the votes of the people, no self-seeking, over-reaching, grasping, ambitious leader of a party. Oh no! there was one end; their country's—one motive; a desire to serve, not to rule her—one party; Freedom's Band against the world—one glorious, animating contest, to outstrip each other in patriotic deeds—one noble achievement; the foundation of a nation—exciting all, encouraging all, arming all with unshaken fortitude, persevering labor, unconquerable bravery, inextinguishable zeal. I should delight to tell you of that most venerable of all Assemblies, the old Continental Congress. Oh, how it should warm our affection for our Fathers and awaken gratitude to God, to remember that chosen Band! How should our cheeks be suffused with shame, to reflect that some of our modern Hotspurs, bloated sots, fierce, angry, contentious, abusive, swearing, gambling, ambitious Demagogues, call themselves the successors of Hancock and Adams, Witherspoon and Wythe, Carrol and Harrison, Franklin and Lee! How solemn their Assemblies, when men spoke bold, daring words, doubtful whether a Patriot's fame, or a Traitor's fate awaited them! How did the lip quiver, and almost refuse to utter the dictate of the heart, when the bold proposition to sever the band uniting the colonies to

England, was discussed! It is said, when assembled on the 4th July, 1776, to sign that Instrument, for many minutes a solemn stillness reigned throughout the house. None moved, none spoke. Yet those men were not alarmed. No! they were oppressed with the sense of the solemn, almost awful responsibility which they incurred. They were determined, and the more so, because they were deliberate. They were deliberate, and the more so, because they were serious. And it was in this spirit, the great body of those who participated in that memorable contest, thought and acted.

I had intended to say nothing on this occasion of the courage and patriotism of our Fathers, as illustrated in the camp and on the bloody field of battle. But I cannot forbear a brief allusion to the career of one, whose name and connexion have introduced to my notice, his generally unknown and unappreciated character.

Of two sons of a gentleman of Frederick county, the eldest embarked in the cause of American freedom, on the first alarm which echoed through the land from the cannon of Lexington and Bunker Hill. He sustained from the first, a high reputation for all those virtues, which distinguish the patriot warrior. In the attack on Quebec, he won a most eminent fame, though destined, by the errors of others, to a painful captivity in reward for his courage. After release, he again volunteered in his country's service, and by numerous instances of distinguished valor in the sphere which he occupied, rapidly rose to distinction. By the death of his Father, placed in possession of considerable property, after providing for his sisters, he invested his all in money and embarked it in his country's cause. He fell at the battle of Camden, mortally wounded. Robbed of his papers and money, he was unable during his days of decline, to furnish his executors with the evidence of his claims, or even administer to his own wants. A generous enemy supplied his necessities, and after a protracted season of suffering from his wound, in the effort to reach Charleston, travelling with his brother and servant, he died on the banks of the Santee. His country supplied a grave, his brother averted from his fame the reputation of having owed to charity the comforts of a sick and dying bed, but for his active services, his patriotic zeal, his ge-

nerous devotion to the cause of American Freedom; this poor tribute of one, but lately a stranger to his name, is all his memory has received. Col. PORTERFIELD conferred distinction on his native State, on his country, on her armies; to this time that country has hesitated to acknowledge the claims of his heirs, to what justice, to say nothing of gratitude, should long since have granted.

3. Let us remember the *Honor, Simplicity and Industry* which marked the character of our Fathers.

There may have been, in the army, some misled by that false code of honor, which values the mere puff of a depraved public sentiment, and the dictate of a gothic spirit, more highly than the Law of God and man, the ties of friendship or the tender endearments of the domestic circle. But such men were rare. The honor, of which I speak, was evinced both in public and private life, by a strict regard for truth, and an honest discharge of all obligations. In those days, neither the character nor name [in the modern acceptation] of *Defaulter*, was known, and our Fathers lived and died in blissful ignorance of that new mode of paying national debts and securing absolution from solemn contracts, called *Repudiation*. True, their almost empty coffers afforded few temptations to the defrauder, but their monetary agents, far from evincing a grasping avarice for what was their country's, oftener sacrified their property to aid her cause.

We love to dwell on the frugal, simple and industrious habits of those worthy men. And yet it deserves remark, that those who most diligently cultivated such habits, were the least chargeable with a species of modern frugality, consisting in withholding donations to charitable objects; a species of modern simplicity, curtailing those expenses, which promote moral improvement; and a species of industry, too common in our day, working seven days instead of six of every week.

Labor was then esteemed no disgrace, whether it were labor with the hand or of the head. Schemes of rapid accumulation by a species of gambling called Speculation in Lands and in Stocks, trading on a capital twice or thrice the value of the estate, on which it was borrowed, and living in luxury at the expense of creditors, were all undiscovered modes of procuring or

exhibiting wealth. The device of increasing property by breaking, and growing rich while ostensibly poor, were equally among the unresolved mysteries of a future day. "Hard hands and brawny arms, the dingy workshop and dusty field, soiled and weather-stained garments, on which mother earth had embroidered her own honors," were not then considered the marks of disgrace, when connected with honest, brave hearts, pure life and christian conduct; but rather the insignia of true nobility, the trophies of manly achievement. Nor was it alone dislike to England which then inhibited the foolish aping of foreign manners, and the contemptible fondness for swaggering Lords, upstart authors, mustachioed Counts, or penniless, profitless Barons, which have so disgraced boasted Republican Americans. Whimpering sentimentalism, affected graces and superficial accomplishments were not the adornings of our mothers, nor idleness and extravagance the attributes of gentility among our fathers.

4. I proceed to offer some illustrations of the *religious Principles* of the men of the Revolution. And here in the abundance of materials offered for my use, I find myself at a loss to select and present with necessary brevity, even the most brief.

Of the piety of Gen. Washington, we have scarcely room for the least doubt. In private life, he lived a christian, according to the most uniform testimony. During his military career, harassed and perplexed by the immense and arduous duties of his station, he found time for the service of God, in secret. He was no stranger to his public worship. He looked with childlike confidence to the God of nations, to imbue him with wisdom and strengthen his arm. Among others, our deceased friend has left the testimony of personal observation and knowledge, to the truth of these statements. But I shall not undertake, by the exhibition of individual characters, to illustrate the position before us. While we should find many lamentable opposites to the pious character of Gen. Washington and others, it may be clearly established, that the *public sentiment* of the day was deeply religious, and not merely religious, it was *christian.* The official documents emanating from the Commander-in-Chief and from the Old Congress, even regarded as insincere, (which few however are disposed to assert) must still constitute conclu-

sive confirmations of the christian sentiments of the people at large. For even supposing few or none of those, who held the language, about to be quoted, were sincere in its use; *that they did hold it*, and that in their most solemn official declarations, evinces a conviction on their part, that it was agreeable to the people. I believe they were sincere, that is, the larger part,—that the Congress as a body, and Gen. Washington and his immediate advisers and associates, were deeply imbued with genuine heartfelt piety.

Not to tire your patience, with extensive quotations from the various documents before the public, I shall select a few, most emphatically confirming the truth of the position now taken. When resigning his command of the Army, Gen. Washington says, "I accepted the office with diffidence in myself, but with confidence in the patronage of Heaven, and my gratitude for the Interposition of Providence, increases with every review of the momentous contest." In his inaugural address, he avows his "fervent supplications to that Almighty Being, who rules the Universe, who presides over the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His Benediction may consecrate the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States ..... and enable every instrument employed in the administration of the government, to execute with success, the functions allotted to his charge." He assures himself that in this homage to God, he expresses the sentiments of the Legislature and the people. He records his solemn belief, that every step by which "the people had advanced to the character of an independent nation, had been distinguished by some providential agency."

The Continental Congress, among the earliest important enactments, appointed a "day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer to Almighty God, that the Colonies might ever be under the care and protection of a kind Providence; that America might soon behold a gracious interposition of Heaven." "And," says Ramsay the Historian, "since the Fast of the Ninevites, perhaps there has not been one, which was more generally kept with suitable dispositions, than that of July 20th, 1775. It was no formal service. The whole body of the people felt the im-

portance, the weight and danger of the unequal contest in which they were about to engage; that every thing dear to them was at stake; and that a divine blessing alone, would carry them through it, successfully. This blessing they implored with their whole soul; impressed with an humble confidence in the mercy and goodness of that Being who had planted and preserved them hitherto, amid many dangers, in the wilderness of the new world." It was no mere formality that the signers of the Declaration of Independence used, when they expressed "their firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence" and solemnly appealed from the decisions of earthly potentates, to the supreme judgment of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, on the purity of their motives and rectitude of their intentions.

Two years after the appointment of "the Day of Fasting and Prayer" the Congress *unanimously* adopted a Preamble and Resolutions appointing a day for "solemn Thanksgiving and praise," from which, a few disjointed extracts will fully bear out the character, already assigned the authors of the Instrument. "It is the duty of all men, to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty God, to acknowledge, with gratitude, their obligations to him, for benefits received, and to implore such further blessings as they stand in need of: And it having pleased him in his abundant mercy, ... to smile on us in the prosecution of a just and necessary war, for the defence and establishment of our inalienable Rights and Liberties . . . . . to prosper the means used for the support of our troops, and to crown our arms with the most signal success: It is therefore recommended to the Legislative or Executive Powers of these United States, to set apart Thursday, 18th December next, for solemn Thanksgiving and praise . . . . . that the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts, and consecrate themselves to the service of their Divine Benefactor . . . . . may join [to this] the penitent confession of their manifold sins, ... and their earnest and humble supplication that it may please God, through Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out from remembrance. . . . . That it may please him to prosper the trade and manufactures of the people, and the labor of the husbandman . . . . . and the means of Religion, for the

promotion and enlargement of that Kingdom, which consisteth in Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Once more, in the minutes of this venerable body for October 12th, 1778, there occurs the following noble expression of sentiment, "Whereas true Religion and good morals, are the *only solid foundation* of public liberty and happiness: Resolved that it be, and it is hereby earnestly recommended to the several States, to take the most effective measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppression *of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners.*" Such documents can hardly be expected from our present Legislatures, either State or National. They would now perhaps excite the derision of many: but such should remember that they themselves are accustomed to honor these men for their wisdom, courage, prudence, zeal and patriotism. Here we see the secret source of these virtues—"*They trusted in God.*" Let men deride and mock: it has been well observed, "Had our forefathers been less puritanical, we had been less free."

In view of the conflicts of party, the animosities and jealousies of opposing factions, the embarrassments of our affairs, the venality and corruption of too many in high places, the truculency and slavishness of aspiring demagogues, the violence and brutality of mobs, the contempt for sound principles of morality, and pure, undefiled religion, openly professed by many, and practically evinced by nearly all in power; the frauds, the embezzlements and the wasting, practised by monetary agents of Government, and the sad prospects of the future; is it not our duty and our privilege to fly to the Hope of the whole Earth, to look for help to the King of Kings, to cast, in humble believing confidence, the destinies of our beloved land on Him, who was the God of our Fathers, and should be our God and our Guide? Oh that there were a heart in the people to ponder these things—to "cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils" and make the God of Israel their strength and their salvation!

5. Our forefathers were not only religiously disposed themselves, and, as we firmly believe, many of them, personally, decidedly and fervently pious;—but they were firm defenders and

faithful expositors of the *Rights of conscience*. All denominations of christians shared in the common danger and the common labor. Remembering that most galling yoke of British tyranny, that mitigated, but not destroyed, remnant of oppression and papal imposition, a Church Establishment, with its exaction of support for a creed they did not receive, and a worship they could not practise;—they determined, that by constitutional provision, no right of conscience, respecting Religion, freedom of speech, the press, or of petition, should ever be curtailed or impeded by any legislative enactment. It is important to observe, that although a few individuals were found, especially in the State of Virginia, (which had had experience of some of the benefits and evils of an Established Church,) somewhat disposed to modified forms of a union of Church and State, and in Massachusetts, in which a very great uniformity of creed, removed some of the chief obstacles to a support of religion by Law; yet the great body of the people, most resolutely insisted on securing to all, full rights of conscience, imparting to no man nor set of men the power of "lording it over God's heritage." The Presbyterian and (out of the Establishment in Virginia) the Episcopal clergy,—though naturally supposed by many, to sympathize with an institution in which their respective maternal churches of Scotland and England, were so nearly interested;—so far from opposing, sustained the political action on this important subject. The Presbytery of Hanover, then comprising in its bounds, nearly all the Presbyterian clergy and churches of Virginia, in four or five able and eloquent memorials to the Virginia Legislature, not only deprecated all Legislative interference in matters of faith, but on the agitation of some Bill, proposing to incorporate the ministers of Religion, of the various denominations, then prevalent, and by general assessment, provide for their support—the Presbytery most decidedly and unanimously entered its solemn protest. These important papers are in the office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates of Virginia. They have been published, but are too long for any thing farther than this reference. Such were the sentiments of our forefathers generally, throughout the Union and we believe we speak the language of all Evangelical Pro-

testant Christians now, when we say *such are still our sentiments*.

II. But time would fail me, and your patience be exhausted, by presenting any farther illustrations of the principles of the men, who wrought our national deliverance. Let me now briefly present, in the life and character of Gen. PORTERFIELD, a specimen of those men, and the operation of those principles, which I have feebly attempted to pourtray.

His life, though long, presents but few very striking historical reminiscences. Of his birth, parentage and education, but little need be said. He boasted of no nobility, and needed to boast of none, higher than that, which his life illustrated. His family depended, for respectability, on no empty titles, conferred by vain conceited princes, to prop the factitious dignity of thrones, based in blood, robbery and oppression. To say he was born on the 22nd February, 1752, in the county of Frederick, one of four children, two sons and two daughters, who survived their parents, inheriting from them, a moderate sufficiency of this world's goods; a name unsullied by disgrace, and honored by the best of reputations, that of the unbought, but not undeserved esteem of those who knew them; and principles of virtuous conduct, sufficient, if practised, to continue them in the possession of their heritage,—to say this, is to say all, that the scanty materials to be gathered after the lapse of nearly a century, enable me to say: and yet this is enough. Had parents been less virtuous, less honest, less worthy, the son might have been all he was, with no reflection on his character, by reason of their infirmity. Had they been, of all mankind, the purest and best, *their* virtue could not have wiped from a degenerate son, one spot of any moral impurity, by which he might have polluted himself.

He entered the army 1776, and remained rising in reputation and rank till the capture of the American forces at Charleston, when he was destined to exchange service in his country's cause with prospects of personal honor and glory for suffering a painful captivity. Let us never forget, that such suffering is equally, if not more fully, declarative of genuine patriotism, and as worthy, if not more worthy of our grateful remembrance, than the active and brilliant career of the successful warrior. The

captive pines in tedious and often degrading confinement, with nothing to alleviate his condition arising from reflections on the personal fame and glory of his life; while the fortunate soldier, for all his hardships has a consolation and support, in the double motive of contributing to his own and his country's glory, and honor and safety.

After the war, he removed to this county, where he formed a large circle of friends and acquaintances, was often honored by the marks of esteem tendered by his fellow-citizens, and, though it may have been the misfortune of some, either to have been incapable of appreciating him or ignorant of his value, none of those who knew, failed to respect and honor, if not to love him. He was a patriot, such as I have endeavored to describe. Through life, whether in public or in private, he bore, for himself, by his conduct, one uniform testimony, that the ends at which he aimed, were those of his country's welfare. At the call of that country, in peace, he performed, with marked fidelity and interest, the duties of a magistrate, and when age disqualified him longer to serve, personally, he aided his juniors in office, by his counsel to them and the influence of his example on the public sentiment. When war once more threatened desolation to our land, he readily offered himself to aid in perpetuating, as he had aided in securing, our National Rights. Through a long and severe, but to him, by party ascendancy, unsuccessful political contest, party scrutiny could find nothing in his character, on which, its malignity, even had it existed, might delight to dwell. He was a gentleman. He was emphatically a good specimen of a race of men,—leaving, it is to be feared, more descendants than successors,—who were polite without hypocrisy, sensitive without fastidiousness, genteel, without foppery, candid without rudeness, hospitable without ostentation, condescending without meanness, kind without flattery, generous without extravagance, and economical without penuriousness. His was the gentility of a Virginia gentleman, when the name was an honorable appellation, and not a mere complimentary epithet.

As parent, husband, master, those who had reason to know him best, need no eulogy at my hands, and the sanctity of do-

mestic relations may not be disturbed, when public opinion can be satisfied as to what does not concern the public, by the full satisfaction afforded in what does.

With all his estimable qualities, in the performance of all his duties, in the consciousness of his well-founded claims on the approbation of his fellow-men; he yet "thought on his ways" in the Judgment of an Omniscient eye, and realizing his condition in *His* sight, as a helpless lost sinner, fled for Refuge and Help to the "Hope set before him in the Gospel." He professed several years since the experience of a renewed heart, and the enjoyment of peace of conscience, assurance of God's Love and hope of final acceptance through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. He united himself to this Church, and continued to his death, consistently with his profession, a Christian and a Presbyterian. He loved the Church of his choice, her scriptural doctrines, her simple modes of worship, her Republican form of Government, but he was no bigot. His was an intelligent choice and he could afford to be liberal. His faith was not a mere speculation, nor was his confession merely orthodox. He added his personal testimony to that of the men of his generation, to the value of the Gospel of Christ, and ever diligently impressed on others, reverence for the authority and obedience to the commands of God. His last appearance in the house of God, (a few Sabbaths previous to his death,) was rendered memorable in the minds of all who saw him, by his audible testimony of his appreciation of sentiments, on the obligation of the Sabbath law, and the blessings it confers, which the preacher expressed. Long may this community enjoy the recollection of his virtues and the influence of his example.

III. It remains for me to close this discourse, with a few practical remarks, suggested by topics, now presented to your consideration.

1. We should be mindful, that *the permanency and purity of our political institutions, must depend on the will and character of the people.*

We call ours a government of laws, but of what force is a law, to one, who is at once law-giver and subject, beyond his own will?

It may be, that a written and recorded purpose is properly regarded as possessing, formally, a more binding power, than mere assertion; but, morally, the one is as binding as the other. As with individuals, so with communities. The law is an expression of popular will.

We infer the character of our forefathers from their institutions. It remains to be seen how far those institutions correctly declare the character of their posterity. When the popular will becomes corrupt, the best laws and constitution remain a dead letter, are set aside by mobs, or formally displaced, for legalized expositions of error and authoritative decisions of wickedness. Let principles, opposed to those of our forefathers, take possession of the popular mind, let irreligion and infidelity succeed piety and the fear of God, selfish and party motives usurp the place of patriotism; let men become enamored of a religion of mere form and show, which substitutes devotion to a saint, for the worship of God, and makes obedience to a Foreign Prince, obligation paramount to all other, let the moral restraints of the Bible be sundered, and men permitted to follow the dictates of inclination; then you may give written constitutions and libraries of laws to the flames. All history proves, that men cannot be controlled without religion of some sort, unless it be by the strong hand of Tyranny; and that, unless that religion be that of God's revealed word, it ever will become the colleague of superstition, and the subservient tool of demagogues and despots. Already have we had fearful illustrations of the truth of these remarks, in the insubordination of some portions of our country.—When the wicked bear rule the land mourneth, and it matters not whether the wicked be one or ten thousand Rulers. If our institutions are preserved in practice as well as theory, the people of this country must be virtuous as well as intelligent. Mere civilization, the progress of science, the improvements in art, the extension of commerce, the perfection of machinery, will but advance men in wealth, to enervate them by luxury, and condense our population in vast masses of commercial and manufacturing communities, to fret and ferment in their own corrupting intercourse, and exhale the fœtid effluvia of every moral abomination. Unrestrained by moral principles, undirected by

sound Bible truth, the people of this country, by all their increase in numbers, wealth and prosperity, will find the very fundamental institutions of liberty perverted to their destruction. The right of suffrage will become the high road to power, for men of licentious principles and ambitious designs, to "wither with their frowns, and bruise with their iron feet our fair inheritance." Liberty of conscience, will be but a liberty to violate all law, human and divine, and to substitute the riotings of anarchy for the regularity of peace and good order, and the will of infuriated mobs, for the constitutional decisions of upright judges. Freedom of speech and the press, will only serve to agitate the elements of society, with the bitterness and rancour of party spirit, the mutual denunciations of the most flagitious; till the public sense of propriety, decency, honor, politeness and purity, shall have been blunted, and men shall be prepared to witness with the insensibility of brutes, relieved only by a puerile curiosity, the most terrible scenes of outrageous cruelty, bloodshed, and oppression. Let us then remember our Fathers, and seek to preserve, by the constant inculcation and practice of their principles, the valuable legacy of their labors, their prayers and their wisdom.

2. Let us ever observe the proper distinction between the political and ecclesiastical interests of society. Our venerated friend, in the only publication from his pen which I was ever permitted to see, has presented us the proper view of this subject. Let the State foster and protect the Institutions of the Gospel; let the Church yield to good Laws and sound principles of Justice, her constant support. Because Church and State are disunited, they are not independent of each other. Let us guard carefully against the error, to which some have been driven, in presenting as hostile interests, the governments of men and the government of God. True Religion, in its precepts and practices, is the best morality—no man, imbued with the Spirit of Christ, becomes a worse citizen, in any relation of life. But while we believe it a duty of patriotism, as well as Religion, to aid in promulgating the truths of the Gospel, the State, as such must guard with a jealous eye, every tendency to a union, which has uniformly subjected men to the impositions of imposture, the

dictates of spiritual despotism, and the exactions of insatiable avarice. I fear some signs of the times.—I fear the overweening spirit of the Roman Jesuit.—I confess, I tremble for my country, when, by the machinations of one, and the mere request of another of the Emissaries of Rome, the Bible, the bulwark of our morality, the basis of our Laws, the charter of the rights of conscience, is discarded from the public schools of two of the largest cities of our Union. Let none construe this as a specimen of religious bigotry. That God has his people among the professed followers of the Pope, I have no doubt,—but I have as little, that the unchanging and unchangeable temper of the Jesuit, is evinced in the present schemes of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in our Land. Rome can afford to conform to any Government, and adopt the peculiar spirit of any age, for the great principle of Jesuitical devices is summed up in "Oaths with Mental Reservation," and "no Faith to be kept with Heretics." The facts of recent occurrence in New York and Philadelphia, shew what Rome is, when she has the power, to overthrow our liberties, and how soon the power may be hers, none can say: "The price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance."

3. Our subject, to-day, in connexion with the brief notices of Gen. PORTERFIELD, instructs us in *the value of the Gospel.*

Godliness is indeed profitable for all things. The principles of faith and practice, revealed in this blessed book, can alone conduct man safely through time, can alone open to him the enduring source of Eternal felicity, when time shall be no more.

Guided by them, man is happier in the humblest sphere, allotted by God, than he can be, without them, in the loftiest. Their possession adds weight to character, firmness to resolution, and energy to enterprise. They invest man with a dignity becoming his origin, and commensurate with the aspirations of his immortal soul. They impart security to our rights, faithfulness to Rulers, obedience to the ruled, order to society, peace to communities, and to every individual, fully under their control, that priceless possession, a contented spirit. But if, "in this life only, we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Religion confers all its temporal blessings as mere incidental results of the great purpose of its Revelation. It derives all the conso-

lations, by which it soothes in adversity, sustains in affliction, and gladdens in prosperity, from the unseen and "Eternal weight of Glory," to which its promises direct the eye of the christian. We are furnished in the closing years of our venerable patriot, an instructive lesson on its power over calamities, which few know by experience, and none can otherwise properly estimate—calamities, whose experience can never instruct others to endure them, and for which, the greatest moralist of antiquity, in one of his most celebrated essays, vainly endeavors to offer alleviation;—I mean of course, the calamities of old age. Long since he had reached that period when he seldom greeted a cotemporary of his youth. For many years he had enjoyed the occasional company of his old friends, or his compatriots in arms, but latterly, he stood amongst us almost alone, as the representative of his generation and his station in the Army. Had he died fifteen years ago, he had died an old man and full of years; he had then fulfilled the allotted period of human life. Few linger so long as he did. Old men called him an old man, and the middle aged said "he was old, when we first knew him." He had seen three generations of our race. He connected us with men whose names are known to us in histories published long before our birth, and with events, whose record has already become defaced by time. He had survived the partner of his bosom, longer than the average period of human life. Of all his cotemporaries, not one of his family, had now, for several years, remained to cheer his solitude. Long since he had buried from his own house, her, who had rewarded his fraternal protection and love, by the tender and care-assuaging assiduities of sisterly affection. By reason of their own age and infirmities, the visits of old soldiers had become fewer and farther between, till the last venerable relic of his early friends, paused for the last time on his threshold and with trembling knees and palsied tongue and feeble hands, the final adieus of earth were pronounced. His own infirmities increased, as his comforts decayed. Even the affection of children and grandchildren could contribute but little, to relieve sorrows, of which they could know nothing, or remove griefs of whose effects only, they could be informed. What natural sympathy can there be

between the vigor of mature life or the joyousness of youth, and the decrepitude of age? That he valued the efforts of his affectionate offspring, whenever made, to impart cheerfulness to his solitary hearth, peace to his mind, not yet quiet under the pains of bereavement and the accumulated cares of a long life, and comfort to a body waxing feeble by disease and often more a source of grief than of happiness; that he was rejoiced by all of tenderness, care and filial respect and kindness evinced, none knew so well as they who saw the cheerful smile with which he greeted, or the tearful regret with which he parted from them. But none knew better than he, that no earthly affection, however pure and tender, could successfully administer to the sorrows of an old man, bending under the pains and infirmities of fourscore years and ten. His eye had grown dim, his voice was feeble, his hand trembled with age, his feet and ankles grew weak, his palate refused to taste, his ear grew tired with hearing, desire had failed, "the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl broken, the pitcher was broken at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern." Food failed to nourish as well as to gratify. Reading ceased to instruct by reason of a decaying memory, and almost ceased to amuse, by reason of the melancholy conviction, that it could no longer instruct. The affairs of the neighborhood, the news of the day, had but little interest for one who had outlived his cotemporaries, and to whom most of the present generation were unknown, or only known by their ancestors.

With so many bodily infirmities, aggravated by the gradual undermining of an incurable disease, his chief, if not only bodily pleasure, arose from the temporary alleviation of suffering, provided by the skill and tender care of his physician. For many years his greatest mental pleasure had been, to recall and detail to willing auditors, the interesting scenes of his youth and manhood. But this resource of amusement to the aged, gradually failed. His own narratives lost interest to himself by repetition, however interesting to others. He never *desired* death, however tired with life's toils and sorrows, and uniformly expressed his cordial submission to the will of Him who gave, to be exercised, in taking what he gave, at His own good pleasure. And yet,

with all the aggravations of his infirmities, and all the diminution of his comforts, he was not an unhappy man. What then was the source of his consolation, the basis of his happiness? *He was a Christian.* Yes my hearer, this blessed Gospel can shed its consolations around that dreary winter of Life, infirm old age, when the supplies diligently sown in spring, nurtured in summer, and matured in autumn, no longer administer comfort. Earth may be barren, "friend after friend depart," happy associations be changed to sources of misery and regret, the keener by as much as once they afforded a greater degree of delight; each limb, each sense, each faculty, become but the medium through which grief assails the sufferer; but when "flesh and heart fail," he who has made God his refuge and leaned for support on the Redeemer of God's people, can say, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Though each chosen source of earthly pleasure may have failed and all the springs of comfort be frozen, there is One who assures us "I will *never* leave thee nor forsake thee. Even down to gray hairs, I am He. Such, my hearer, were the consolations which it was the privilege of our venerated friend to enjoy. What a precious Faith, how rich this Gospel in all necessary to make our sorrows less! But it is not exhausted. Its blessings are still abundant. God is rich in Mercy to all that call on Him, to all that call on Him in sincerity and truth. Though millions have been supplied at this fountain, its streams are sufficient for millions more. To the young, the middle aged, and the aged, it says, "Come ye to the waters, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of Life freely."

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